Challenges of Pronunciation Practices in the ESL Curriculum within the CLT Framework in Bangladesh: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

This systematic review explores the challenges of pronunciation in the ESL curriculum within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework in Bangladesh. Pronunciation, a critical component of language proficiency, often presents significant hurdles for ESL learners. The review highlights key issues such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and the influence of native language interference. It also examines the impact of large class sizes and the lack of individualized attention on learners' pronunciation skills. The CLT framework, while promoting communicative competence, sometimes overlooks the explicit teaching of pronunciation, further complicating the acquisition process. This study synthesizes findings from various research articles to provide a comprehensive understanding of these challenges. It underscores the need for targeted professional development for teachers, the integration of technology, and the inclusion of pronunciation-focused activities in the curriculum. By addressing these issues, the ESL curriculum in Bangladesh can better equip learners with the necessary pronunciation skills for effective communication.

Keywords: pronunciation challenges, ESL curriculum, CLT method, pronunciation-integrated technology, teachers' unpreparedness, native language interference, language proficiency

1. Introduction

Communicative proficiency in English has become a pressing demand in the world of globalization, and the promotion of reformation, policies, and practices in ESL education has been a crying need in non-native English-speaking countries (Hui, S., & Yunus, M., 2023). English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction has drawn a lot of interest in Bangladesh, especially in the context of communicative language teaching (CLT). The CLT framework, which prioritizes interactive learning and real-world communication, has been implemented to improve communicative proficiency among Bangladeshi students (Rokaiya, U., & Saharuddin, N., 2022). Even with these efforts, there are still issues, especially with pronunciation, which continues to be a major obstacle to developing fluency and intelligibility in English (Qasserras, L., 2023).

One of the **most significant aspects** of language competency is pronunciation, which impacts communication, intelligibility, and learners' self-esteem and general language proficiency (Levis, J., 2018). The foundation of the CLT approach emphasizes clear and effective communication that is based on proper pronunciation. But the ESL curriculum within the CLT framework has somehow overlooked pronunciation or not given enough attention to it, particularly in non-native English-speaking nations like Bangladesh (Qader, M., Rahman, M., & Monira, S., 2023). There are several different variables contributing to this overlook, including cultural norms, resource constraints, and

educational regulations.

Bangladesh transitioned from traditional grammar-translation methods to a more participatory and student-centered approach with the introduction of the CLT framework. Rather than having students memorize grammatical rules by heart, CLT places a strong emphasis on using real language in context to help them become more competent communicators (Swapna, M., 2023). Although this method has improved language instruction, there have been difficulties in putting it into practice. Pronunciation instruction is one of the crucial areas where CLT seems to be lacking.

Teaching and learning pronunciation within the CLT framework in Bangladesh faces several challenges (Jahan, N., 2021). Inadequate teacher training, limited resources for language practice, native language interference, large class sizes, a lack of individualized attention, and nonalignment in the curriculum contribute to these issues (Rahman, M., & Pandian, A., 2018). Teacher education programs often fail to prioritize pronunciation, leaving teachers ill-equipped to address this crucial aspect of language learning (Karim, A., & Mohamed, A., 2019). Limited resources, such as audio-visual materials and pronunciation software, hamper effective pronunciation teaching. Native language differences between Bengali and English make it difficult to correct pronunciation errors without targeted intervention. Large class sizes limit the opportunity for focused, individualized feedback, making it difficult for students to receive the necessary guidance (Seargeant, P. et.al, 2017). Additionally, there is no scope for pronunciation assessment in examinations, preventing students from practicing pronunciation in their ESL curriculum (Amin, M., & Greenwood, J., 2018).

This **study aims** to conduct a systematic review of the challenges associated with pronunciation in the ESL curriculum within the CLT framework in Bangladesh (Islam, M., 2021). By synthesizing findings from existing research, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues and propose actionable recommendations for improving pronunciation teaching and learning in this context. Moreover, the following **research questions** have guided the study: 1. What are the primary challenges faced by ESL learners in Bangladesh regarding pronunciation within the CLT framework? 2. How do factors such as teacher training, resource availability, and native language interference impact pronunciation teaching and learning? 3. What strategies can be implemented to address these challenges and enhance pronunciation instruction in the ESL curriculum?

According to the operational definition in the context of this systematic review, "pronunciation practices" refers to the pedagogical methods, activities, and strategies implemented in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms to teach students the correct pronunciation of English sounds, words, and sentences (Purwanto, A., 2019). The term "ESL Curriculum within the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) Framework" encompasses the structured and planned educational programs designed to teach English language learners through the principles of CLT, which emphasize interaction and communication as the main goals of language learning. The focus of this study is on identifying and analyzing the challenges faced by educators and students in effectively implementing pronunciation practices within this specific curriculum framework in Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

The importance of pronunciation in second language acquisition has been widely acknowledged in the fields of linguistics and ESL education. Because L1 interference in L2 pronunciation practice is crucial as a natural disturbance for ESL learners around the world (Begum, A., & Hoque, M., 2016) (Qader, M., Rahman, M., & Monira, S., 2023), in the same way, the phonetic and phonological differences between Bengali and English contribute significantly to pronunciation difficulties among the learners of Bangladesh . In Bangladesh, the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework has brought both opportunities and challenges to the forefront, particularly in teaching pronunciation (Ahmed, M., 2016). The review examined recent studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of these challenges within the ESL context in Bangladesh.

2.1 Pronunciation in ESL Education

Pronunciation is a critical aspect of ESL education, impacting both intelligibility and communicative competence and confidence. Previous studies indicated that clear pronunciation could significantly enhance learners' ability to communicate effectively (Galante, A., & Piccardo, E., 2021). Non-native English teachers in Bangladesh lacked confidence in teaching pronunciation due to insufficient training, and their non-native status affected their overall teaching practices (Bai B. & Yuan R.E, 2019). Pronunciation anxiety, including fear of negative evaluation and beliefs about pronunciation, is linked to a lower willingness to communicate in a foreign language classroom, highlighting the impact of pronunciation on students' confidence in speaking tasks (Baran-Łucarz, 2014).

Additionally, pronunciation instruction is deemed necessary for ESL learners, with student practice being crucial for enhancing pronunciation and boosting confidence in using English as a foreign language (Tejeda A. C. T, et.al, 2014). Mobile-assisted pronunciation training has shown positive effects on learners' pronunciation performance and attitude towards pronunciation learning, indicating alternative methods to improve pronunciation and confidence in ESL communication (Lan, 2021).

2.2 Nonalignment of Pronunciation with the ESL Curriculum within the CLT Framework

Bangladesh has already been launching the CLT method in the ESL curriculum for two decades, from primary to higher secondary level education, to enhance students' communicative competence in the English language (Rahman MM, Pandian A., 2018). It mostly emphasizes communicative competence by including reading and writing skills that have only been prioritized in vocabulary and grammar practice. CLT has often overlooked the explicit pronunciation instruction. This curriculum has extremely ignored speaking and listening skills that require pronunciation practice (John Levis J. & Sonsaat S., 2017). As the two skills integrated with pronunciation practice have been avoided in the ESL syllabus, both teachers and students don't emphasize pronunciation practice because most of them are not self-motivated to learn and teach explicit pronunciation practice to improve their communicative competence (Saeed, D., & Bostanci, H., 2022).

Moreover, the absence of focused pronunciation assessment within the CLT framework significantly contributes to the challenges faced in teaching and learning ESL (English as a Second Language) pronunciation (Chan, J., 2021). Because CLT primarily emphasizes communication and interaction, often prioritizing fluency and the ability to convey meaning rather than the accuracy of pronunciation. Consequently, pronunciation, speaking, and listening might not receive the same level of attention and systematic evaluation as other language skills like reading and writing (Da'ar, G., 2016). Without dedicated pronunciation assessment tools and criteria, teachers must struggle to accurately examine students' progress in pronunciation. To effectively address these challenges, integrating pronunciation assessment into the CLT framework is crucial (Chan, J., 2021). So, there is no alignment of pronunciation practice with the ESL curriculum within the CLT framework in Bangladesh.

2.3 Teachers' Unpreparedness and Inadequate Training

As there is no scope for practicing pronunciation in the existing ESL curriculum within the CLT method, teachers are almost reluctant to teach explicit pronunciation, and they have consequently become unprepared (Jarosz, 2019). Besides, teachers' training is also designed by ignoring pronunciation terminology, so they cannot achieve any potential strategy of teaching pronunciation from the training sessions. Several studies highlight that ESL teachers in Bangladesh often lack adequate training in pronunciation instruction (Kabir, M. et.al, 2022). (Mostafa Nazari, et.al, 2022) point out that teacher education programs frequently emphasize grammar and vocabulary over pronunciation. This gap in training leaves teachers ill-equipped to address pronunciation issues effectively.

2.4 Limited Resources and Large Class Sizes

Recent studies have explored the potential of technological interventions in addressing pronunciation challenges. The use of language learning apps and online platforms can significantly improve pronunciation by providing learners with interactive and immediate feedback (Fouz-González, J., 2020). These tools offer a practical solution to resource constraints and can be integrated into the CLT framework to enhance pronunciation teaching. The scarcity of resources, such as language labs, audio-visual aids, and pronunciation software, further intensifies the challenge (Liu, Z. et.al, 2022). Many schools in Bangladesh operate with limited budgets, making it difficult to provide the necessary tools for effective pronunciation practice. This lack of resources hinders interactive and engaging learning experiences crucial for improving pronunciation (Rahman, M., & Pandian, A., 2018). Another factor is that large class sizes are a common issue in the educational institutions of Bangladesh, which has limited the opportunity for individualized attention and practice (Blatchford, P., & Russell, A., 2019). Effective pronunciation teaching requires focused, personalized feedback, which is difficult to provide in overcrowded classrooms (Talukder, M., Green, C., & Mamun-ur-Rashid, M., 2021). This issue is compounded by the lack of teaching assistants and support staff.

2.5 Teacher and Student Attitudes and Motivation

Learners' attitudes and motivation play a significant role in pronunciation acquisition. A study by (Smit, U., 2022) reveals that positive attitudes towards English and high motivation levels are associated with better pronunciation outcomes. Therefore, fostering a positive learning environment and encouraging students to practice outside the classroom are key strategies for improving pronunciation.

3. Method of Systematic Review

This systematic review of literature on pronunciation challenges in the ESL curriculum in Bangladesh, using the CLT framework, aims to provide a comprehensive analysis, identify key issues, and offer recommendations for improving pronunciation instruction, ultimately improving learners' communicative competence and language proficiency.
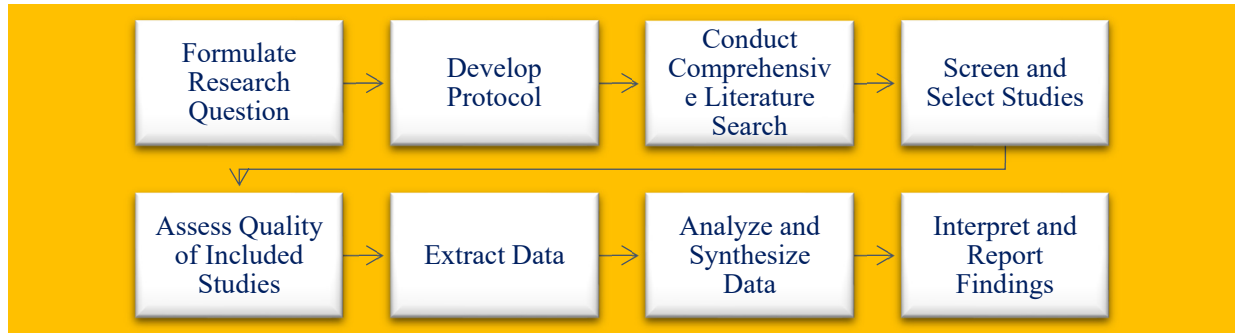

Figure 1. Method of Systematic Review of Literature

3.1 Research Design

This systematic review explores pronunciation challenges in Bangladesh's secondary level ESL curriculum, using a structured approach to identify patterns, themes, and gaps in existing literature, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding and potential solutions.

3.2 Search Engines and Strategy for Databases

The literature search was conducted using a world-famous academic database, especially Google Scholar and others. Keywords such as "pronunciation challenges," "ESL curriculum," "CLT framework," "Bangladesh," and related terms were used to identify relevant studies.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion principles of the data collected in the study always tried to meet the following features: (i) studies focused on ESL education in Bangladesh; (ii) research examining pronunciation challenges within the CLT framework; (iii) articles published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable academic sources; (iv) studies published in English to ensure accessibility and comprehension; and finally (v) research conducted within the past 10 years to ensure relevance. On the contrary, the exclusion criteria also tried to check the norms: (i) studies not directly related to pronunciation challenges in ESL education, (ii) research focused on non-CLT frameworks, (iii) articles not peer-reviewed or from non-academic sources, and (iv) studies published in languages other than English.

3.4 Study Selection and Data Extraction

The study screened numerous studies for relevance based on titles and abstracts. Full-text versions were obtained and reviewed, and the final selection included those that provided valuable insights into pronunciation challenges in the ESL curriculum within the CLT framework in Bangladesh. Data was extracted using a standardized form, including author(s), publication year, study title, research objectives, method, key findings, and recommendations for addressing these challenges.

3.5 Quality Assessment and Data Synthesis

The Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) checklist was used to assess the quality of studies, focusing on research objectives, methodology appropriateness, data analysis robustness, validity, reliability, and relevance. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and patterns related to pronunciation challenges and their impact on ESL learning.

3.6 Thematic Analysis and Ethical Considerations

The thematic analysis involved multiple readings of selected studies, coding data based on recurring themes, grouping codes into broader themes, reviewing and refining themes, and assigning clear definitions to each theme. Ethical considerations included ensuring data accuracy and integrity, providing proper attribution to authors, and reporting findings objectively and transparently. This systematic review adhered to ethical guidelines for research.

4. Results of the Review

The systematic review of relevant literature reveals several key findings related to the challenges of pronunciation in the ESL curriculum within the CLT framework in Bangladesh. These results highlight the multifaceted nature of the issue, encompassing factors such as teacher training, resource availability, native language interference, class sizes, and individualized attention.

4.1 Challenges of ESL Pronunciation

The diagram below highlights key challenges in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) pronunciation in Bangladesh. Here is an explanation of each challenge:

Figure 2. Challenges of ESL Pronunciation in Bangladesh

Explanation: The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework often neglects pronunciation, leading to poor pronunciation habits that are difficult to correct later. This is exacerbated by a lack of systematic pronunciation assessment, which makes it difficult for teachers to monitor students' progress and provide feedback. Teachers often lack adequate preparation, either due to insufficient training or lack of professional development opportunities. There is also a shortage of pronunciation-integrated training programs, which often fail to equip teachers with the practical skills needed to address pronunciation issues effectively. Large class sizes and limited instructional time further exacerbate the problem. The integration of technology in ESL pronunciation is also a challenge, as it can provide interactive and immediate feedback. Resource constraints include a lack of trained educators, insufficient access to technological tools, and limited availability of updated materials. Furthermore, motivation among teachers and students is often lacking, leading to minimal effort in improving pronunciation skills. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes revising the curriculum, incorporating regular assessments, providing targeted teacher training, utilizing technology, and fostering motivation.

4.2 Strategies to Overcome the Challenges

The diagram below presents various strategies to overcome challenges in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) pronunciation in Bangladesh. Here is an explanation of each strategy:

Figure 3. Strategies to Overcome the Challenges of ESL Pronunciation in Bangladesh

Explanation: The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework emphasizes the importance of pronunciation in teaching, incorporating it into lessons with specific goals and activities. Regular assessment of pronunciation is crucial for tracking student progress and providing feedback. Teachers are prepared through continuous professional development (CPD) programs, covering the latest research in phonetics, effective teaching methods, and practical tools for pronunciation instruction. Pronunciation-integrated training is available for both pre-service and in-service teachers, addressing pronunciation challenges. Limited class sizes and longer class periods can enhance the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction. Technology-integrated practice offers interactive and engaging ways to improve students' skills. Advancements in technology have expanded the availability of resources for pronunciation teaching and learning. Boosting motivation among teachers and students is vital for sustained pronunciation practice. Implementing these strategies can significantly enhance the effectiveness of ESL pronunciation teaching in Bangladesh. A holistic approach that includes curriculum integration, regular assessment, targeted teacher training, technology use, and motivation can lead to improved communication skills among students.

5. Discussion

The enhancement of English as a Second Language (ESL) pronunciation within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework in Bangladesh faces multifaceted challenges. Addressing these issues requires a

comprehensive approach that incorporates increasing government budget allocations, fostering negotiations among stakeholders, and ensuring accurate implementation of policies and practices.

5.1 Increasing the Budget of the Government

A significant factor in improving ESL pronunciation is the allocation of sufficient financial resources by the government. Current budget constraints limit the ability to provide the necessary tools, training, and resources required for effective pronunciation teaching (Lan, En-Minh, 2021). Increasing the budget dedicated to education, particularly for ESL programs, can facilitate the acquisition of modern educational technology, professional development for teachers, and the development of specialized pronunciation curriculum materials (Loc Nguyen, et.al, 2021). With increased funding, schools can implement language labs equipped with audio-visual aids that enhance phonetic instruction, thereby improving students' pronunciation skills (Li, 2024). Furthermore, consistent funding can support ongoing teacher training programs, ensuring educators are well-versed in the latest pronunciation teaching techniques and technologies.

5.2 Negotiations among All Stakeholders

Improving ESL pronunciation within the CLT framework requires concerted efforts and collaboration among various stakeholders, including government bodies, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and the community (Rahmatuzzaman, 2018). Effective negotiations and partnerships can lead to the development of a cohesive strategy that addresses the needs and challenges faced by each stakeholder group (Wertheim, 2021). For instance, policymakers can engage with teachers to understand the practical difficulties they face in the classroom and develop policies that provide practical support (Hammond L. D, et.al, 2016). Parents and communities can be involved in supporting language learning at home, reinforcing pronunciation practices outside the classroom (Indriati, I., 2016). Educational institutions can collaborate with linguists and ESL experts to design comprehensive pronunciation programs tailored to the specific needs of Bangladeshi students (Islam, M. Z., 2019). Such collaborative efforts can create a supportive environment that promotes effective pronunciation learning and addresses systemic issues.

5.3 Accurate Implementation of Policy and Practice

While increasing the budget and fostering negotiations are crucial, the accurate implementation of policies and practices is equally important. Policies designed to improve ESL pronunciation monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved. Teachers must be provided with practical tools and resources to implement pronunciation-focused activities within the CLT framework (Chang, Ching-yueh, 2018). Additionally, there should be an emphasis on ongoing professional development to keep teachers updated on the latest methodologies and technologies for pronunciation teaching (Hermans, F. et.al, 2017). Effective implementation also involves regular assessment and feedback mechanisms that help identify gaps and make necessary adjustments to the programs. Schools should be encouraged to adopt a learner-centered approach where students' pronunciation progress is continuously monitored and supported through tailored interventions (Sardegna, 2021).

Thus, the discussion highlights the critical factors necessary for improving ESL pronunciation within the CLT framework in Bangladesh. By increasing the government budget, fostering negotiations among stakeholders, and ensuring the accurate implementation of policies and practices, significant advancements can be made in pronunciation teaching and learning. A holistic approach that integrates financial support, stakeholder collaboration, and practical implementation will create a robust environment for enhancing ESL pronunciation skills among Bangladeshi students, ultimately contributing to their overall language proficiency and communicative competence.

6. Conclusion

This systematic review highlights the multifaceted challenges of pronunciation in the ESL curriculum within the CLT framework in Bangladesh. Key issues such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, native language interference, large class sizes, and a lack of individualized attention impede effective pronunciation instruction. While the CLT framework promotes communicative competence, it often overlooks the explicit teaching of pronunciation, leading to persistent errors and reduced intelligibility. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, including comprehensive teacher training, increased investment in resources, class size reduction, and the integration of pronunciation-focused activities into the curriculum. Leveraging technology and fostering positive learner attitudes are also crucial for improving pronunciation skills. By implementing these strategies, the ESL curriculum in Bangladesh can better support learners in achieving clear and accurate pronunciation, thereby enhancing their overall communicative competence in English. Ultimately, these efforts will contribute to the broader goal of improving

English language proficiency among Bangladeshi students, equipping them with the necessary skills for effective global communication and participation in an increasingly interconnected world.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article titled " Challenges of Pronunciation Practices in the ESL Curriculum within the CLT Framework in Bangladesh: A Systematic Review" The research was conducted independently, and no financial support, sponsorship, or funding was received from any commercial or non-commercial organization that could potentially influence the results or interpretation of the study.

All data used in this study were collected and analyzed by the authors without any external influence or bias. The findings and conclusions presented are solely based on the author's academic investigation and professional judgment. Furthermore, the author has no affiliations, financial interests, or personal relationships with any entities that could be perceived to affect the objectivity or integrity of this research.

This declaration ensures that the research is conducted transparently, and the results are presented impartially, contributing to the academic community's understanding of the role of educational technology in enhancing ESL pronunciation competence at the secondary education level in Bangladesh.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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